

March 14, 2013

Public Safety Committee
Connecticut Legislature
210 Capitol Ave.
Hartford, CT 06106

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am a lifelong resident of Connecticut and the mother of two young children. I have been an attorney in this State for 12 years.

Prior to the Sandy Hook massacre, I didn't give much thought to guns or gun control. But now that has changed. The horrific events of December 14, 2012 have opened my eyes. Since that terrible day, I, like so many other Connecticut citizens, have become highly informed on this issue. The result is that the overwhelming majority of Connecticut voters now favor stricter gun control laws, with 68% of voters favoring an expansion of the assault weapons ban and a ban on high capacity ammunition. We are not motivated by fear or emotion. We are motivated by common sense.

Guns like the AR-15 used by Adam Lanza to slaughter 20 precious children and 6 brave women should not be owned by civilians. These guns are not used for hunting, and they are not necessary for self-defense. These are weapons of war which were designed for military use. Their sole purpose is to kill large numbers of people as quickly as possible.

No person can honestly argue that Adam Lanza would have been able to inflict the same level of carnage if he had not used an assault rifle such as the AR-15. These weapons are not just "cosmetically" different than other semiautomatic firearms. Assault rifles such as the AR-15 are equipped with many features which make them easier to handle and faster to shoot than any other semiautomatic weapons. These features include the light weight of the gun and its pistol grip, which allow the gun to be easily braced against one's shoulder. Also, detachable high-capacity magazines and the minimal recoil of the AR-15 allow large numbers of bullets to be fired much more rapidly than with a semiautomatic hand gun. And, most appallingly, one can purchase a rapid-fire trigger attachment for the AR-15, which allows the gun to be fired as quickly as a fully automatic weapon. Using these assault weapons, even an inexperienced shooter can spray a room with bullets in a very short period of time. There is no accuracy or marksmanship required in order to inflict a high level of carnage.

Assault weapons such as the AR-15 are, by far, the most lethal and the most unnecessary firearms in our society. The NRA and the gun manufacturers know this, but

they would prefer to have you believe that the AR-15 is nothing more than a “modern sporting rifle,” which is no different than a traditional hunting rifle or shotgun. This is as dishonest and as morally reprehensible as cigarette manufacturers touting the health benefits of cigarettes in the 1950s. To allow assault rifles such as the AR-15 to further proliferate in our State and our Country is nothing short of an outrage.

Sadly, as we have seen in Aurora, Tuscon, Virginia Tech, Oak Creek and Sandy Hook, mass murders are becoming a common event in our society. Unfortunately, no law will stop this horrific trend. However, by expanding the assault weapons ban and by banning high capacity magazines, you will ensure that mass murderers do not have access to the most deadly weapons of all. Although this will not save every life during a mass shooting, it will most certainly save a few. Every life is precious, and each person’s right to life far outweighs any person’s interest in owning an assault rifle.

Finally, this is not a question of Second Amendment rights. No person has an absolute right to bear arms. Like all other constitutional rights, Second Amendment rights are subject to restriction and limitation. The United States Supreme Court has stated that “we do not read the Second Amendment to protect the right of citizens to carry arms for *any sort* of confrontation, just as we do not read the First Amendment to protect the right of citizens to speak for *any purpose*.” District of Columbia v. Heller, 554 U.S. 570, 595, 128 S. Ct. 2783, 2799, 171 L. Ed. 2d 637 (2008) (Emphasis in original). No person needs to own an assault rifle such as the AR-15, and no one’s constitutional rights will be violated by banning such weapons.

Connecticut’s voters have spoken. I urge you to listen to the collective voice of your constituents and ban assault weapons and high capacity magazines. Going forward, I will not vote for any legislator who does not support these measures, and I am sure that many of my fellow citizens feel the same way.

Sincerely,

Melissa A. Scozzafava
139 Artillery Road
Middlebury, CT 06762

